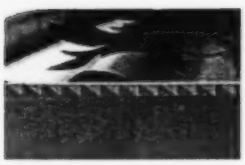

News Release Communiqué

2-2845

MINISTER PRENTICE AND ANISHINABEK NATION SIGN GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT-IN-PRINCIPLE

NIPISSING FIRST NATION, Ontario (February 16, 2007) - The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, and Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, today signed a Governance Agreement-in-Principle (AIP). The AIP establishes a framework for the Anishinabek Nation, represented in the negotiations by the Union of Ontario Indians, to assume greater control over its own institutions of government.

"Canada's New Government is committed to working with First Nations to support stronger First Nation governments as a key step in improving the lives of First Nation people," said Minister Prentice. "This important agreement sets the groundwork for participating First Nations to adopt new governance institutions and structures that are more responsive and more accountable to their communities."

"The AIP on Governance is one step toward eliminating the *Indian Act*, re-asserting our jurisdiction, and re-establishing our own Anishinaabe forms of government," said Grand Council Chief Beaucage, who represents the forty-plus member First Nations of the Anishinabek Nation. "We look forward to completing these negotiations and forging new relationships with Canada that provide practical and effective ways to implement our inherent right to self-government and improve living conditions for our people."

The Agreement provides the framework for the establishment of the Anishinabek Nation government and for the recognition of First Nation governments with law-making authority in four core governance areas: leadership selection, citizenship, culture and language, and management and operations of government.

The Agreement also reflects the Government of Canada's support for replacing outdated provisions of the *Indian Act* with a modern legislative framework for First Nations governance. It provides a practical approach for supporting First Nations to strengthen their internal governance and solidify the political and financial accountability of First Nation governments to their citizens, while operating within the Canadian Constitutional framework.

The Agreement-in-Principle concludes the second of a three-stage negotiation process, and is not legally binding. A Final Agreement becomes legally binding on the parties only once it has been approved by the

participating First Nations' citizens and brought into force through federal legislation. An Anishinabek Nation Framework Agreement on Governance was signed by the parties on November 26, 1998. As negotiations proceeded, the Province of Ontario has been kept apprised of developments.

The Anishinabek Nation and the Government of Canada have also been negotiating toward a "Final Agreement with Respect to the Exercise of Education Jurisdiction." An Agreement-in-Principal on education was signed by the parties in 2002.

The UOI is the oldest First Nation political organization in Ontario. It was incorporated as the secretariat arm of the Anishinabek Nation in 1949 and traces its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires which existed long before European contact. The Anishinabek Nation has a population of approximately 50,000 citizens, and comprises one-third of all First Nation communities in Ontario.

This release is also available on the Internet at
The Union of Ontario Indians.

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Backgrounder - Anishinabek Nation Agreement-In-Principle With Respect to Governance

Back to News Release Index

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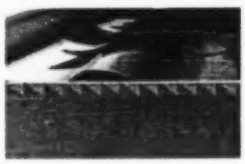
Top of Page

Important Notices

A - Z Index
News Releases
Indian & Inuit Art
Northern Affairs Program
Employment
Education
Kids' Stop
Treaties
Status - F A Q
Programs
Services
PSAB
Sustainable Development



BACKGROUNDER

Anishinabek Nation Agreement-In-Principle With Respect to Governance

The Anishinabek Nation is a political organization representing over 40 Ontario First Nations in a traditional territory which stretches around the Great Lakes from Lake Nipigon in the north, to the St. Clair River in the south, to Golden Lake in the east and Lake Superior in the West. Comprised of Tribal Nations including Ojibway, Odawa, Pottawatomi, Algonquin, Mississauga, Chippewa and Delaware Nations, the Anishinabek Nation represents approximately 50,000 people, or 30% of the First Nation population in Ontario.

In 1995, the Anishinabek Nation's Grand Council authorized its secretariat arm, the Union of Ontario Indians, to begin self-government negotiations with Canada. The Anishinabek Nation Framework Agreement on Governance was signed in November 1998 and negotiations towards an Anishinabek Nation Agreement-in-Principle With Respect to Governance ("AIP") began in 1999.

The AIP on Governance represents an important step toward the establishment of governance systems that are based on Anishinabek values and culture. While many First Nations have achieved important progress in recent years, there are communities within the Anishinabek Nation that continue to experience unacceptably high unemployment rates, poor health conditions, housing shortages, inadequate water and sewer treatment systems and unsatisfactory education success rates.

The AIP lays the foundation for more effective governance in the Anishinabek Nation's communities by confirming legal status, providing for the development of constitutions, requiring appeal and redress mechanisms, and providing a new and more appropriate framework for political and financial accountability between First Nation Governments and their citizens.

These measures, once confirmed in an approved Final Agreement, will allow participating First Nations to begin to break free of the *Indian Act* and more effectively promote strong economies and healthy communities.

The purpose of the AIP is to provide a framework for the negotiation of a Final Agreement to:

- establish an Anishinabek Nation Government to address issues of collective First Nation concern; and
- provide for the exercise of jurisdiction and authority by Participating First Nations' governments and the Anishinabek Nation

Government.

Self-government agreements are typically developed through a three-stage process, starting with the negotiation of a Framework Agreement, through to an Agreement-in-Principle, and concluding with a Final Agreement. A Final Agreement becomes legally binding to both parties only once it has been approved by the participating First Nations' citizens and brought into force through federal legislation.

Under an Anishinabek Nation Final Agreement on Governance, sections of the *Indian Act* dealing with elections, membership and some aspects of community governance would no longer apply as First Nations would adopt their own laws in these areas. In the future, Canada and the Anishinabek Nation may agree to enter into further negotiations on other important subject matters.

The Anishinabek Nation and the Government of Canada have also been negotiating toward a "Final Agreement with Respect to the Exercise of Education Jurisdiction." An Agreement-in-Principal on education was signed by the parties in 2002.

Quick Facts on Self-Government

- The Government of Canada recognizes the inherent right of self-government as an existing Aboriginal right within section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.
- Aboriginal peoples in Canada are unique. Typically, negotiations will not result in a single model of self-government. Self-government arrangements take many forms based on the diverse historical, cultural, political, and economic circumstances of the Aboriginal peoples, regions, and communities involved.
- The "Anishinabek Nation Agreement-in-Principle With Respect to Governance" is one example among a broad set of current initiatives across Canada that allow First Nations to replace the outdated and unsuitable governing arrangements of the *Indian Act*. There are currently over 70 self-government negotiation tables across the country, involving more than half of Canada's First Nation and Inuit communities.
- Stronger Aboriginal government institutions help attract investment and partnerships that will promote economic development and improve social conditions in their communities.

Back to News Release

Back to News Release Index

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Top of Page

Important Notices